

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) The method of reducing stress in a center pivot irrigation system during a period of time that the system is not functioning and is experiencing cooler temperatures with the system having:

- a) a pivot support assembly including a horizontally extending pipe portion;
- b) an elongated irrigation pipeline, having inner and outer ends, supported upon a plurality of spaced-apart drive towers;
- c) the inner end of the pipeline being fluidly connected to the horizontally extending pipe portion of the pivot support assembly;

comprising the following steps:

- d) fluidly disconnecting the inner end of the pipeline from the horizontally extending pipe portion of the pivot support assembly;
- e) while maintaining the inner end of the pipeline in alignment with the horizontally extending pipe portion of the pivot support assembly to facilitate the fluid reconnection of the inner end of the pipeline to the horizontally extending pipe portion of the pivot support assembly when the system is going to be used to irrigate.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein a support assembly is secured to and extends between the horizontally extending pipe portion and the inner end of the pipeline.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein a flex joint is provided on said horizontally extending pipe portion.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of reducing stress in a center pivot infringement irrigation system during a period of time that the system will not be operating having:

- a) a pivot support assembly including an upstanding pipe connected to a source of water;
- b) a horizontally extending pipe portion at the upper end of the upstanding pipe which is in fluid communication therewith;
- c) an elongated irrigation pipeline supported upon a plurality of spaced-apart driver towers and having inner and outer ends;
- d) the inner end of the pipeline being fluidly connected to the horizontally extending pipe portion;

comprising the following steps:

- e) fluidly disconnecting the inner end of the pipeline from the horizontally extending pipe portion;
- f) while maintaining the inner end of the pipeline in alignment with the horizontally extending pipe portion to ease the fluid reconnection of the inner end of the pipeline to the horizontally extending pipe portion.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein a support assembly is secured to and extends between the horizontally extending pipe portion and the inner end of the pipeline.

6. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein a flex joint is provided on said horizontally extending pipe portion.

1 7. (Currently Amended) An irrigation system, comprising:
a pivot support structure;
an elongated irrigation pipeline supported upon a plurality of spaced-apart driver
towers;
5 said pipeline having inner and outer ends;
said pivot support structure including a generally vertically disposed pipe fluidly
connected to a source of water, and a horizontally extending pipe portion at the
upper end of said generally vertically disposed pipe;
10 said inner end of said pipeline being fluidly connected to said horizontally extending
pipe portion;
a disconnect alignment assembly operatively secured to and extending between said
horizontally extending pipe portion and said inner end of said pipeline;
15 said disconnect alignment assembly adapted to maintain said inner end of said
pipeline in alignment with said pipe portion when said inner end of said pipeline
is fluidly disconnected from said horizontally extending pipe portion to reduce
stress in the system during a period of time that the system will not be
functioning and to facilitate the subsequent reconnection of the inner end of the
20 pipeline to the horizontally extending pipe portion when the system is going to
be used to irrigate.

25 8. (Original) The irrigation system of claim 7 wherein a flex joint is operatively
secured to said pipe portion.

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9. (Original) The irrigation system of claim 7 wherein said disconnect alignment assembly comprises:

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- (a) a first support means secured to said horizontally extending pipe portion;
- (b) an elongated member having inner and outer ends, said inner end of said elongated member being secured to said first support;
- (c) a second support means on said inner end of said pipeline;
- (d) said second support means movably receiving said elongated member.

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10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) The irrigation system of claim ~~40~~ 15 wherein said second support is removably clamped onto said inner end of said pipeline.

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12. (Currently Amended) The method of reducing stress in a center pivot irrigation system during a period of time that the system is not functioning and is experiencing cooler temperatures with the system having:

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- a) a center pivot support;
- b) an elongated irrigation pipeline extending outwardly from the center pivot support and which is comprised of a plurality of pipe sections, each of the pipe sections having inner and outer ends;
- c) a plurality of spaced-apart drive towers supporting the irrigation pipeline;

comprising the following steps:

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- d) fluidly disconnecting the outer end of a first pipe section from the inner end of a second pipe section;

1 e) while maintaining the inner end of the second pipe section in alignment
with the outer end of the first pipe section to facilitate the fluid
reconnection of the inner end of the second pipe section to the outer end
of the first pipe section when the system is going to be used to irrigate.

5 13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12 wherein a support
assembly is secured to and extends between the outer end of the first pipe section and
the inner end of the second pipe section.

10 14. (Currently Amended) An irrigation system, comprising:
a pivot support structure;
an elongated irrigation pipeline supported upon a plurality of spaced-apart drive
towers;
said pipeline being comprised of a plurality of pipe sections, having inner and outer
ends;
15 a disconnect alignment assembly operatively secured to and extending between the
outer end of a first pipe section and the inner end of a second pipe section
adjacent thereto;
said disconnect alignment assembly adapted to maintain said inner end of said second
20 pipe section in alignment with said outer end of said first pipe section when said
first and second pipe sections are fluidly disconnected from one another to
reduce stress in the system during a period of time that the system will not be
functioning and to facilitate the subsequent reconnection of the inner end of

1 said second pipe section to the outer end of said first pipe section when the
system is going to be used to irrigate.

15. (New) An irrigation system, comprising:

a pivot support structure;

5 an elongated irrigation pipeline supported upon a plurality of spaced-apart driver
towers;

said pipeline having inner and outer ends;

10 said pivot support structure including a generally vertically disposed pipe fluidly
connected to a source of water, and a horizontally extending pipe portion at the
upper end of said generally vertically disposed pipe;

said inner end of said pipeline being fluidly connected to said horizontally extending
pipe portion;

15 a disconnect alignment assembly operatively secured to and extending between said
horizontally extending pipe portion and said inner end of said pipeline;

said disconnect alignment assembly comprising:

(a) a first support means secured to said horizontally extending pipe portion;

20 (b) an elongated member having inner and outer ends, said inner end of
said elongated member being secured to said first support;

(c) a second support means on said inner end of said pipeline;

(d) said second support means movably receiving said elongated member;

25 said second support means including a pair of horizontally spaced-apart support
members; each of said support members having upper and lower rollers

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mounted thereon; said elongated member being movably received between
said upper and lower rollers on said support members.

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